



Building Community Partnerships for Lasting Impact

BY CARA MURDOCH AND SHERRY ROCHA

Community collaborations can strengthen your early childhood program, expand services for families, and increase your visibility and credibility as a trusted resource in the community. But effective partnerships don't begin with a phone call—they start with a **plan**.

START WITH INTERNAL PLANNING

Before reaching out to community members or organizations, gather insights from your internal team. Hold a brief planning meeting to discuss goals, identify needs, and build a shared vision for collaboration. Consider including:

- Members of your [board of directors or advisory board](#)
- Program staff members
- Interested family members and parents of enrolled children.

REVISIT YOUR [MISSION AND GOALS](#)

A clear, shared understanding of your program's purpose will guide effective partnerships. Before reaching out to community members or organizations, gather insights from your internal team. Hold a brief planning meeting to discuss goals, identify needs, and build a shared vision for collaboration.

Consider including:

- What is your mission?
- What strengths and expertise do we bring to the community?
- What challenges do our enrolled families face?
- What support or resources would be most helpful?
- What can we offer potential partners in return?

Clarity about these questions will ensure that your outreach to community members and organizations is focused and meaningful.

LEARN ABOUT LOCAL RESOURCES

Begin exploring the services and organizations that exist in your community. These may become valuable **referral partners** or direct collaborators.

Examples include:

- Early intervention services
- Family support agencies
- Mental health providers
- Multilingual tax-preparation volunteers

Knowing these resources helps you connect families with the help they need.

SHARE YOUR SPACE AND SERVICES

Your early childhood center may be a valuable asset for other groups. Consider offering your space to other programs or groups to strengthen your role as a community hub.

Possibilities include:

- Scouting America or Girl Scout meetings
- Parenting workshops or support groups
- Health screenings or [nutrition programs](#)
- Community committee meetings

PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY EVENTS

Raising visibility in your community opens doors to partnership. Become involved in:

- Neighborhood clean-up days
- Local fairs or festivals
- Library literacy events
- Cultural celebrations
- School district events

These types of interactions naturally build trust and relationships.

BUILD AND EXPAND YOUR NETWORK

[Partnerships](#) often begin with small conversations or shared goals. Stay curious and connected—the more people you meet, the more opportunities arise.

Potential collaborators include:

- Museums
- Public libraries
- Human services departments
- Colleges and universities
- Local schools
- Cooperative Extension services
- Hospitals and clinics
- Banks and financial advisors
- Mental health agencies
- Early intervention programs

REMEMBER: PARTNERSHIPS ARE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

Successful collaborations are built on:

- Clear communication
- Shared goals
- Appreciation for each other's strengths
- A commitment to supporting families and the community

Whether the support you receive is financial, advisory, or educational, strong partnerships help everyone thrive.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Community partnerships don't happen overnight. With the proper planning, your early childhood program can become a powerful and connected resource in your neighborhood. Start small, stay open to ideas, and let relationships grow.

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